
Defense Report

AUSA



Military Compensation: Too Much—Too Little

Many, probably most, members of the military today are concerned at what they perceive to be moves to erode their military pay and other compensation they receive for their service.

The Secretary of the Army, Martin R. Hoffmann, commented on this problem this year in presenting the Army Budget to the Congress. He said, in part:

“The Army is not simply a job or a place to work. It is a total way of life. At times it is a difficult and dangerous way of life. . . . In return for his commitment of service to the Nation, the soldier expects and is entitled to a return from the Army and the Nation, concomitant with the exactions of that service.

“. . . Since 1973, many personnel programs have been reduced or terminated. A number of other changes are under consideration. The net effect of these piecemeal actions has been to convince many soldiers that the commitment of the institution to their welfare is not as strong as it once was. To attract and retain young men and women of quality . . . the Army must convince them that the institution's commitment has not lessened and that the needs of the professional military force will be supported at the highest level.”

The piecemeal attack on military compensation referred to by the Secretary includes proposals which would provide substantially less savings in commissaries, more cost for CHAMPUS, reduction in family housing construction, and an arbitrary military pay raise limit below raises scheduled for civilians, both in and out of government.

Some observers, including the AUSA, believe some realignment in military compensation may be both necessary and logical, but that the problem should be studied *in toto*, rather than attacked piecemeal in an apparently helter-skelter fashion.

Both the Defense Manpower Commission and the Quadrennial Military Compensation Review study now underway in DOD are considering the total compensation package. Their recommendations will have the benefit of studied consideration by peers and therefore be more acceptable to the military man than the current piecemeal approach. If the Nation's commitment to its military is indeed not lessened, the piecemeal proposals should be withdrawn to await the availability of a well thought out total package.